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SENSITIVE
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PARIS AND LONDON FOR AFRICA WATCHERS, FOR AF/C AND CA/OCS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: CASC PGOV CD

SUBJECT: CHAD: AMCIT DETAINED NEAR LIBYAN BORDER

¶1. (U) The Embassy was notified on Sunday, October 14, that American citizen Stephen Godbolt had been detained since October 12 in the town of Zoumri by ten members of the Chad rebel group MDJT. The rebels belong to a small MDJT faction that has not accepted the terms of recent peace agreements with the Government of Chad (GOC). Zoumri is approximately 60 kilometers from Bardai, Chad's northernmost city, and close to the Libyan border. Godbolt was en route to Bardai with Tubu acquaintances who are implementing a U.S.-Department of Defense funded well project. Godbolt has lived and worked in the Tibesti region of Chad for many years, is well known in the Chadian Tubu community (the dominant group in the Tibesti) and speaks Teda. He is a member of a missionary group called TEAM (The Evangelical Alliance Mission). Godbolt was traveling with the required GOC "Authorization to Circulate" and a valid Chad visa.

¶2. (SBU) According to Godbolt's TEAM colleagues in N'Djamena, Godbolt is being well taken care of and there are no immediate concerns for his well-being. They themselves are not sure why Godbolt was seized but believe that it may have been at the behest of MDJT leader Choua Dazi, currently resident in Libya. They speculated that Dazi may be acting under the influence of Libyan President Ghaddafi who objects to westerners in the Tibesti region. Absent any communication from the MDJT rebels, or from the GOC concerning the detention, no one can speak authoritatively as to why Godbold has been detained. While local GOC authorities in the Borkou-Ennedi-Tibesti (BET) region are aware of the incident, we do not know if N'Djamena authorities have been informed.

¶3. (SBU) For the time being, missionary colleagues are activating various networks of influential Tubus to exert pressure on the MDJT to release Godbolt. TEAM may eventually bring in a contract crisis management specialist to handle the situation. They made clear that they would not pay any ransom. Press queries from BBC and Radio France International have been directed to TEAM.

¶4. (SBU) Post is in regular contact with TEAM to monitor the situation. While they are not worried about Godbolt's immediate situation, they are concerned that - consistent with local cultural norms -- the negotiation process may be quite long and drawn-out.

¶5. (U) Please note that Godbolt has not signed a privacy act waiver. All information reported above was provided by his TEAM and other missionary colleagues.

¶6. Minimized considered.
TAMLYN